

Proposed Incentives for Diversion of Commercial Solid Waste

Harold Ward – 17 March 2005

Primary Objective: Extend the useful life of the Central Landfill to the maximum extent feasible, to provide for reliable and safe disposal of non-recyclable waste generated in Rhode Island. .

Findings:

There is solid evidence from the large amounts of recyclable material that RIRRC is pulling out of commercial waste on the tipping floor that very substantial additional diversion from commercial waste is possible. This fact alone is sufficient proof that the current commercial solid waste regulations are ineffective, at least given RIDEM's current (and prospective) failure to implement them. The current situation also proves that merely setting goals for diversion of commercial waste is insufficient, since the 1995 plan set ambitious goals for recycling of commercial waste, which have been ignored.

Proposed policy:

1. RIDEM should amend current commercial waste regulations by eliminating planning and reporting requirements and by *banning commercial recyclables, and leaf and yard waste from the landfill.*
2. RIRRC should establish a two-tier rate for commercial waste – with one price for waste that is consistent with RIDEM regulations (let's say \$50/T) and a higher rate (say \$70/T) for waste that is in violation of RIDEM regulations. RIRRC currently has the authority to set these rates – **no legislative action is required.** No additional RIRRC personnel are required either, since waste is already being inspected; indeed, it seems likely that *fewer* RIRRC personnel would be necessary, since there will be a dramatically reduced need to pull recyclables out of solid waste on the tipping floor. The \$70/T rate is an estimate based on rates in MA and CT – if this rate is insufficient, it could be raised further. Scoff-law haulers might then take all their waste out of state, which will further lengthen the life of the landfill. Alternatively, scoff-law haulers could be denied access to the landfill, which achieves the same result.

Advantages:

No executive or legislative action is necessary, nor is there any need to license haulers. This policy could be implemented by the RIRRC as soon as RIDEM makes the proposed amendments to their regulations, petitions for which have been pending for over a year. Finally, it is likely that this policy could be extended to provide incentives for diversion of multi-family residential waste.